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mond necklace (which none of them can afford on their own, even after they bargain it down to \$12,000 by letting the jewelry store owner's wife in on the deal) hardly seems like the stuff of life transformation. Yet that, somehow, is what happens. What starts out as a desire for something material transforms into a fresh perspective on abundance for all the women involved.

The women each agree to wear "Jewelica," as they call it, for four weeks. The group meets regularly for hand-over ceremonies, which evolve gradually from wine-and-cheese schmoozefests into serious discussions about how to use the power of Jewelica's beauty for the good of the wider community. Although the women range from an unreconstructed hippie to an NRA enthusiast, they transcend their differences to accomplish things such as helping a local homeless woman get back on her feet and organizing multiple fundraisers for women's and children's organizations. This is the book's crux: how an initial act of materialist longing evolves, through companionship and altruism, into something far greater and unexpected. *R.A.*

The Laughing Cure

A woman's offbeat solution to escaping her own malaise

Reading **WENDY ARON's** *Hide & Seek* (Kunati) is like spending time with an exasperating friend who discloses way too much but also makes you laugh like crazy. In recounting her journey to conquer her depression, Aron includes childhood grievances, adult embarrassments, and self-criticisms galore, all spiked with witty observations and a keen eye for life's absurdities. Surprisingly for its genre, the book avoids a touchy-feely "aha" moment in the end; instead, Aron's epiphany involves realizing that she enjoys making jokes out of the sometimes awfulness of life. The resulting book is less an instructive guide to surviving depression than a colorful character study of someone who did just that. It's the outcome, not the advice, that inspires. *O.V.A.*

ROBIN ABRAHAMS writes the "Miss Conduct" column for the *Boston Globe*. Read her blog at boston.com/missconduct. **DAVID VALDES GREENWOOD** is a playwright and essayist. His most recent book is *A Little Fruitcake: A Childhood in Holidays*.

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